

“God’s Got Your Friends”

TRIBE Sermon Series, Week Three | Newbreak Church | February 28th, 2021

This week is about Friendships. We have all heard it said, “Friends are the family you choose.” Friendships are deeply impactful to us and so they are to be chosen carefully and tended to intentionally.

For more insights relating to this week’s sermon, see <https://newbreak.church/blog/>. We post a new blog every Sunday which coincides with the sermon passage or theme from that day.

Start Here

- What is one of your most fond memories of a childhood friend? Why that one?
- What are some characteristics that you feel make someone a good friend?

Think Deeper by Reading Romans 12:9-13

As you read through these verses keep these questions in mind:

- What value does this chapter add to what we understand about God?
- What are some of the things that stand out to you when you read the passage?

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

Point 1 – Cultivate a tribe of friends who become family over time.

Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family. (Proverbs 18:24, MSG)

In the Hebrew of Proverbs 18:24, the first word for “friends,” refers to people who are acquaintances—we have many of them. The second description uses the Hebrew language of deep and resounding love. This Proverb is about the basic idea of “quality over quantity.” In the age of amassing Instagram followers and Facebook friends, we need to be reminded that quality friends journey with us while the quantity won’t.

- What is the difference between a social media definition of friendship and a real definition of friendship? Do you have true friends whom you consider family?
- **Acquaintances will know your name; your tribe will know your soul.** We need people who know us down to the soul level. Do you have a tribe of friends whom you consider family? Describe how that is nurturing to your soul.
- Take a moment to celebrate a friend. Who was a good friend to you recently? What did they do that made them so? After reflecting, send a text to thank and affirm them.

—ADDITIONAL INSIGHT—

The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Proverbs 12:26, NIV)

Often the Bible refers to the “righteous” as those who walk with God. They are not perfect people who never mess up. But rather the righteous are people who recommit themselves to walking with God even when they fall short. According to the Scripture above, one of the distinguishing marks of the “righteous” person is their careful selection of friends. We ought to be intentional and judicious about who we include in our “tribe” of friends.

Here is a helpful piece of wisdom:

Be friendly to all; friends with many; but “family” with a few.

Friendly to all—our demeanor and actions with all should exude kindness.

Friends with many—regardless if they believe as I do.

“Family” with a few—these are the people I lean into what they have to say. I know I do not have all the answers to life. And I know God likes to speak through our friendships. So I need Christ-followers I can trust to be in my inner circle; my tribe.

Point 2 – Commit to giving my best to my tribe.

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ **Be devoted to one another in love.** Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (Romans 12:9-13, NIV)

This passage speaks to the specific kind of love that is held in family and friendships. Paul, writing to the Church in Rome, knows that many of these people aren't actually blood-family, but he tells them to be as devoted to each other as they would their own family—something that was incredibly important in that day! If you didn't love and honor your family, you were discrediting your own reputation. So for Paul to extend this kind of familial love into the friendships within the body of believers meant something important. Those of your "family" are to be loved with a similar (if not the same) devotion you give to your family.

How do we love friends like family? Here are a few ways:

Be present.

We are all busy. Schedule time for your close friends! One of the ways to spell love is "t-i-m-e." To be "devoted to one another in love" (Romans 12:10) requires a commitment of our most precious commodity—time.

Be authentic.

Often times we feel the need to present ourselves a certain way. Do we have people we can unmask ourselves with? It is a breath of fresh air to be able to reveal ourselves as we are—weaknesses and strengths alike.

Be the friend you wish you had.

It's easy to make a list of what we are looking for from a friend but what about making a list of how we can be a better friend to others? There is wisdom in the words of Zig Ziglar: "**If you go looking for a friend, you're going to find they're very scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you'll find them everywhere.**" In all of the environments we are already in; work, school, church, etc., we should develop those relationships that are right in front of us.

- Out of the above three "B" statements, which one comes most naturally to you? Which one is most challenging? Why?
- What are some practical ways you can work on the "B" statement that does not come so naturally?

- What are some practical steps you can take to start making more authentic friendships?

—ADDITIONAL INSIGHT—

*Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. **Take the lead in honoring one another.*** (Romans 12:10, CSB)

Most of us are interested in the idea of “honoring one another”—it sounds like a great idea! But what does that even mean?

The Greek word for the noun “honor” is *timē* (pronounced tim-aye) appears 41x in the New Testament. The verb form of the word appears 21x. In Greek, “honor” is the same word used to describe or attribute great value to something. The higher the “honor,” the higher the price of something. It is also the word used to attribute high status to someone or something. And sometimes honor speaks to the recognition someone deserves. They are “honored” by being recognized and appreciated.

During the 1st century (when Paul's letter to the Romans was written) honor was something that was considered a possession, based on your social status or your accomplishments.

This resulted in dividing people groups based on the social distinctions between those who have more “honor” than others. Do you see the problem with this? Not only were economic distinctions divisive enough, but then throwing in other social factors surely complicated any ability to see people as peers and equals.

And we can sympathize with those Roman Christians who converted to Christianity from a pagan background. For their previous understanding was that honor was something only the “gods” could bestow. And bestowed it they did...scarcely...and on a select few. In a biblical worldview, however, everyone is intrinsically honored by being endowed with the image of God. This view of humanity was rooted in a Christian understanding of honor, not a Roman/pagan one.

The Western civilization's ideal of all people being treated with equality and honor comes from a Christian principle.

Going against the grain, Paul teaches that Christ-followers are to outdo one another in showing honor. In other words, Christians do not fall into the trap of letting someone’s perceived honor affect how well they are loved or treated. Instead, **Christians are**

called to honor one another without limitation. Christians are to make others feel like they are of high or extreme value by the way they are loved and cared for.

How can you show *this type* of honor to your friends in your life?

*(If you want to see an example of how this is lived out, see James 2:1-13.)

—SUMMARY—

Most of our relationships fall under the category of “friendships.” While there are many concentric circles in which our friendships find themselves, it is important that we purposefully develop our friendships with care.

So we are challenged to:

- 1) Cultivate a tribe of friends who become family over time.
- 2) Commit to giving my best to my tribe.

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

1. How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?
2. What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?
3. BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?